

Once In a Lifetime

by David W. Taylor

The flight along the coastline was enjoyable, and it was interesting to be able to see the landscape and the miles of jungle below. Suddenly in the far distance, I saw the outline of a mountain shrouded in mist. Could that be Kinabalu? We very soon reached the small airport of Kota Kinabalu, and yet another bus drove us to yet another hotel.

After we had settled in our modern hotel, I decided to look around the town. It was market day, and there were people everywhere. The town itself was not impressive; in fact, its description as a concrete jungle was very apt.

The diesel-driven bus that was to take us on the long journey to the Kinabalu National Park arrived on time the following morning, and we were soon outside

the vicinity of Kota Kinabalu and out into the countryside. The drive was very bumpy on roads that were full of holes and after six hours of torture and continuous replacement of cases that were piled up on the back seat, the bus eventually ground up the narrow roadway to the small arrival post of the Kinabalu Park. The large, comfortable chalets that were afforded us were brand new, and we were the first people to use them. They were situated on the left side of a narrow winding track known as the Kamborangah Road which is the beginning of the summit trail to the peaks of Mount Kinabalu. It was early evening and there was not much to do apart from explore some of the surrounding forest tracks,

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OOPS!

Many members noticed and commented on the black captions for the front and back covers of the September issue. Those who examined the pages carefully could see that the captions originally printed were blacked out; in fact, they are the captions for this issue, which were inadvertently mixed up en route to the printer. Fortunately, an alert employee of Kandid Litho realized the error and was able to black out the incorrect captions. The only real confusion came on page 64 of the September issue, which referred to the back cover photo of *Nepenthes bicalcarata*. *Nepenthes bicalcarata* appears on the back cover of *this* issue.

The September covers are photos of paintings by Mr. Paul Connor. Mr. Connor is an accomplished wildlife artist whose paintings have been used regularly by the National Wildlife Federation for their annual conservation stamp series, the US Postal Service for commemorative stamps of natural subjects, Audubon Magazine, and several other publications. He has generously donated the use of these paintings to CPN.

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tured club or official chapter of the I.C.P.S. was undesirable at this time. For the time being, at least, things will be left on an informal basis. We are tentatively planning the second meeting for approximately three months from now. Also in the works is a plan to participate in the Los Angeles Fern Society's annual exotic plant show as a group. I plan to compile a roster of attendees listing species of CP grown to facilitate trading and information exchange.

Anyone interested in participating in our next meeting should contact me at my new address: Steve Clancy, 2009-D S. Circle View Drive, Irvine, California 92715. (714) 553-8408 or (714) 833-7309.

after which it was early to bed in order to be ready for our first full day in the park.

The Kinabalu National Park was established in 1964 and measures some three hundred square miles. I had come here with the specific interest of finding and photographing *Nepenthes*. In the short time that we all had here, I knew that it would be impossible to see every species of *Nepenthes* that the park contained, so I decided to inquire as to the best places to explore to achieve maximum sightings. I was told that the summit trail would be my best track to take, as I would see at least three species and some good scenery besides. This suited me, and I decided to spend my first full day walking up the summit trail. Nobody seemed to want to tackle the gradual climb towards the thirteen-and-a-half-thousand-foot peak of the mountain on the first day, so I had to go alone. Dressed in shorts and tee shirt with a jungle hat, and camera with flash-gun attached slung over my shoulder, I set out on my climb up the mountain early on the morning of August 4th, 1981. The summit trail really started from a power station at the end of the Kambarangah Road, and I soon found myself walking through a maze of twisted trees and steep banks covered in various ferns and mosses. I stopped for a few minutes to gaze at a beautiful waterfall that was cascading crystal clear water down a slippery bank and under the soaked wooden foot bridge where I stood. Further on, the track became tricky, as there were some larger trees to pass by, whose roots were sticking out of the ground wherever one looked. The soil here was of a sandstone clay mixture, and I was thankful that I had a good thick tread on my walking boots. Even so, it would still be easy to catch a foot in the gnarled and twisted root system of the trees, and end up spraining an ankle. I must be careful, I kept thinking to myself, as I trod on a very stout piece of root and hoisted my body over the top of it and down again back

onto the track. Suddenly, I found myself in a small clearing and I was able to look out over the vast area of the national park below. A wisp of cloud drifted over the top of me, and I realized that I was making good headway up the mountain. I was watching all the time for *Nepenthes* plants, and it was not long after my short stop to view the breathtaking scenery of the park, that I saw my first plant. It was on the right hand side of the track, twisting its way round the lower branches of a small tree, competing with a large healthy looking fern that was also growing at the foot of the tree. The species was *Nepenthes tentaculata* and as I walked further up the track, I saw many more plants. It was strange to notice that they were all growing on the right of the track, but they were certainly very abundant. The attractive crimson and green pitchers were everywhere, and there were also seedling plants growing out of the mossy ground as well. According to my guide book, and the map of the mountain region, I was on an elevation of 6,500 feet. The Kambarangah Road where our chalets were was at an elevation of 5,000 feet, so I had climbed a fair distance in quite a short time. After a session of photographing *Nepenthes tentaculata* I trudged on in search for my next species. I really wanted to see *Nepenthes lowii*, and I knew that I was getting very near to the level at which it grew, but I could not see any. Feeling a bit disappointed, I looked up the track, which was now getting very steep. I was determined to get as far up as I could and my next aim was the moss forest. Here was a beautiful part of the mountain where moss grew everywhere, covering the ground, and hanging from the trees. Once here, I found myself alone in a wonderland. There were mosses, ferns, and many orchids, all growing in harmony together, and there was complete silence. I had to keep walking, as the only other species of *Nepenthes* to be found was *N. villosa*. I suddenly walked out onto a larger clearing which was misty with cloud. There



Nepenthes tentaculata
(Mt. Kinabalu)

Photo by D. Taylor.



Nepenthes lowii
(Mt. Kinabalu)

Photo by D. Taylor.



Nepenthes truncata,
grown by Ray Triplitt, won Best of Show
at San Francisco Garden Show, Aug. '82.



San Francisco Garden Show
August, 1982.

Photos by J. Mazrimas.

was quite a breeze blowing, and it was noticeably colder. This was the site of Carsons Camp, and the old tin shack standing here was a reminder of the early explorers of Mount Kinabalu. I was now at a level of 8,000 feet, and I was feeling tired and hungry. I now had to climb over rocks, apart from keeping my footing on the slippery track. But it was worth it, because just fifteen minutes after leaving Carsons Camp, I sighted *Nepenthes villosa*. I could hardly have missed it. The enormous, fat, bizarre-looking pitchers just drew one's eyes, and I stood for a while looking at them in disbelief. The temperature here was only 58 degrees Fahrenheit, and it was windy. Some plants had been broken by the wind, and decaying pitchers lay on the ground. The plants themselves were big, with stems over one-half-inch thick. Their leaves were anything up to 18 inches long, and were very conspicuous among the surrounding vegetation. The pitchers were so remarkable, that I couldn't keep my eyes off them, and it was a tremendous experience to see and photograph such a wonder of the botanical world.

My hunger was getting the better of me by now, and I sat on a rock surrounded by *Nepenthes villosa*, and began to eat my lunch. After this, I decided to press on, although I knew that could not go on much further as I must allow time to return to camp. I eventually made the decision to turn back at 9,500 feet, although I was sorry to have to stop my climb upwards.

As I wandered back down the mountain track, I stopped at the place where I first spotted *Nepenthes villosa*, and I picked up two pitchers that were broken off from the main plants. I felt that I just had to take them back to show the rest of the party. My weary legs were aching from the climb, but now at least it was a little easier for me on the descent. I was still as enchanted with the moss forest as I was when I first entered it on the way up, and eventually I found myself looking once again at the *Ne-*

penthes tentaculata plants, so I knew that I was well on the way towards the start of the summit trail.

As my feet trod onto the stoney surface of the Kambarangah Road, I looked up to the peaks of Kinabalu that rose high above, misty and majestic. I took my time in getting back to the chalets, but was pleased when they came into sight. It was early evening as I climbed the steps to my chalet amid welcoming calls from my colleagues. I was glad to get my muddy boots off, and rest awhile on the bed before discussing my day's adventures. The two *Nepenthes* pitchers I had brought back with me caused a lot of excitement, and everybody wanted to photograph them. I did see a huge pitcher of *Nepenthes lowii* the very next day, when a colleague had better luck than I in finding a solitary plant. I was sorry to learn that there had been much illegal collection of this species on the mountain slope, and consequently it was difficult to find the very few plants that were left.

The following few days at Kinabalu were spent in exploring the forest tracks and botanizing. I longed to spend more time at this fascinating place, but we had to move on. The last remaining days were to be spent seeing some of the tourist attractions. These included a visit to Poring Hot Springs, a tropical beauty spot where one can see *Rafflesia*, the world's largest flower. Unfortunately we were just several weeks too late in seeing the spectacular sight, but we did see some of the largest bamboo trees in existence.

We delighted in the beauty and serenity of the botanical gardens at Singapore, as well as the exquisite blooms of colorful orchids in a private garden. The wide and varied colours of the many flowers in this garden gave me an excuse to test my photographic skills, which I did with much commitment.

My three weeks of adventure was now over, and I was preparing myself for the long flight home, a return journey from an adventure that comes just once in a lifetime.